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ABSTRACT

The Roosevelt School District, with the lowest wealth per pupil of the 56 districts located in Nassau County, Long Island, New York, worked with the Urban Education Department of the University of Massachusetts' Division of Instructional Leadership to design and implement a degree-granting staff development program centered around identifying and solving district problems. The program was designed to help the staff members achieve personal and professional goals while improving school effectiveness. The program also had an action research component and enabled the university faculty to test and demonstrate a productive, school-based program for preparing leadership in urban schools. This document briefly outlines the philosophy and goals of the program; discusses how it was financed, who was admitted, how courses were designed, how linkage between the district and the university was coordinated, and what activities were pursued; and describes some of the indicators of program success. (PGD)

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FOREWORD

The Roosevelt School District is committed to demonstrating that students enrolled in a majority black student body district can achieve a quality education -- that this can in fact happen in this country. By providing opportunities for acquiring quality education we enable students to achieve high levels of personal fulfillment while preparing themselves to assume productive, meaningful places in society.

Because of the continuing commitment, a major goal in this school district is to improve student achievement to its highest possible level. We believe that a well conceived and organized staff development program, which is relevant, need oriented and solution seeking, will play a significant role in helping students reach achievement levels commensurate with their ability.

The highly emphasized "knowledge explosion" and its effect on people, accountability demands of the public, the rapidly changing culture and its implication on curriculum, decreasing enrollments, the low turnover of faculty, the increase of our knowledge of pupils and the learning process, are major factors making a continuous staff development program for teachers and administrators a necessity.

The Roosevelt/University of Massachusetts Staff Development Program provides a systematic and coordinated means of involving the professional employees in activities and study to identify inhibitors to wholesome learning, increase expectations, improve supervision/teaching/evaluations, define objectives, and locate resources, both within and outside the district.

This partnership staff development program works toward developing mental mind sets with increased levels of expectations for students and provides growth and knowledge to professionals by assisting them in refining techniques helpful to meeting present and future needs of Roosevelt students.

This publication describes our guiding philosophy and specific goals, the admittance procedure, coursework, and activities employed, as well as the linkage factors and some preliminary effects of this innovative staff development program.

Ulysses Byas, Ed. D.
Roosevelt, New York

ROOSEVELT/UMASS STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

The Roosevelt School District is one of fifty-six school districts located in Nassau County, Long Island, New York, and is a residential area of one mile square, twenty-five miles east of mid Manhattan. The distance from Roosevelt to Amherst, the home of the University of Massachusetts, is approximately 200 miles. Student enrollment of 3,200 is 97% black, housed in four elementary schools, one pre-kindergarten center, and one junior/senior high school, with a total of three hundred and forty-nine employees, and a supportive annual budget in excess of 16 million dollars.

Despite the fact that the school district has the lowest wealth per pupil in Nassau County, all schools are accredited by Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Many changes have been implemented since 1977. Some of the innovations are: free summer school for elementary and high school pupils; full day kindergarten; in-school suspension program; school within a school for difficult students; extension of school day program; advance placement courses; pre-college technical courses; computer laboratories in elementary and high schools; piano/reading program in primary school; campus beautification; greatly expanded adult education program; positive program for parental participation; and required typing for eighth grade pupils.

On September 1, 1982 a marriage took place between the Roosevelt School District and the University of Massachusetts, Division of Instructional Leadership, Urban Education Department for the purpose of designing and implementing a degree granting partnership staff development program centered around problem identification and solution in our school district.

PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Premises

Designing and implementing a staff development program in Roosevelt with any promise of success, requires consideration of the individual professional goals of employees. Thus, one undergirding premise of our (leadership) staff development is the guiding philosophy that, as employees work toward achieving school district goals, they must feel they are simultaneously achieving their own personal/professional goals, and that employees can and will grow beyond expectation of minimum job description(s).

Another two part undergirding premise on which our design rests is that the new staff development program must:

1) assure vastly accelerated and successful efforts identifying and removing inhibitors blocking wholesome student achievement, and

2) formulate strategies and design new programs to overcome these problems and inhibitors.

Beliefs

The basic beliefs of the Urban Education faculty about Staff Development were joined with Roosevelt's as follows:

1) Staff development is defined as activities designed to expand competencies of personnel in an organization over time.

2) Staff development is comprised of planned steps based on needs and goals of participants, communication of positive reinforcement, and shared responsibility for improved senses of enhanced individual effectiveness and institutional learning climate.

3) Staff development necessarily involves the following four processes:

   a) Creating synergy from professional and organizational developments.
      - mutual benefits for those involved.
      - both institutional direction and personal growth.

b) Fostering adoption and adaptation.

- emphasis on communications and group processes.
- connecting diverse groups in new alliances.

c) Valuing characteristics of successful changing organizations.

- leadership, goal clarity, high standards and expectations.

d) Commiting priority resources to equity needs.

- not to leave anyone out but to recognize special places for traditionally disenfranchised groups. (For more information, see R. Mason Bunker and Merrita Hruska, "School Based Staff Development," Staff Development Program, Amherst, MA 1982)

Goals

The specific goals of the Roosevelt/University of Massachusetts Staff Development Program are to:

1) implement a well-conceived, continuous staff development program which is leadership oriented and degree granting, relevant, need-oriented, solution seeking, and which will contribute toward students reaching achievement levels commensurate with their ability;

2) provide a systematic and coordinated means of involving Roosevelt professional employees in activities and study to identify local inhibitors to learning, increase faculty and pupil expectations, and improve supervision, teaching, and evaluation, through action research and or formal study; and

3) offer university faculty the opportunity to demonstrate a productive, school-based program for preparing leadership in urban schools.

PROGRAMMATIC FACTORS

Finance

The program is financed through two sources, namely:

1) the staff enrollees who pay the regular out of state tuition to the university, and

2) an annual grant to the university of $17,000 from the Roosevelt School District. The latter pays for a Research Assistant, extra clerical help, travel and overnight accommodations expenses of faculty, materials, telephone and postage.

Admittance Procedure

All Roosevelt teachers and administrators who can meet entrance requirements of the university are eligible to enter the degree granting Roosevelt/UMass Staff Development Program. Workshops and lectures held in Roosevelt are open to all professional employees of the district. University applications are made available in the office of the Roosevelt/UMass Linkage Coordinator. The applications are submitted to the University where the decision regarding admittance to the program is made.

Course Design

Each student admitted for candidacy is assigned an initial faculty advisor from the urban education staff. This initial pairing of student/advisor develops the first stages of an individualized program of study. As this develops, the advisor facilitates linkages between the student, the faculty and academic resources from the Amherst campus of the University or from other institutions. This process is enhanced through mini-sabbaticals, and other opportunities to meet with School faculty.

Each course is designed so that it includes a core of reading and discussion for all class members and significant independent projects based on individual goals and professional responsibilities. The process of designing the course starts with student goals and needs of the Roosevelt Schools, and focuses on solutions to those issues consistent with the expressed goals of the district. In accordance with the University of Massachusetts' individualized graduate degree programs, some students may opt for other courses to meet specific needs.

Courses focus on instructional leadership in an urban school system. Learning experiences aimed at developing incremental, professional growth among district staff, with others outside the district intended to add perspective, ideas, resources and new networks, are integrated into the course work.

Program Activities

To facilitate movement toward specific goals of the staff development program the following activities are incorporated into the courses:

1) • assessments of student needs.
   • assessments of parent/community needs.
   • projections of educational demands and fiscal support.
   • identification of existing strengths among staff and programs.

2) • survey of major research studies of urban education.
   • examination of characteristics of effective schools.
   • review of successful staff development projects.
   • laundry list of promising innovations.
   • exploratory or pilot projects to meet short term needs and demonstrate change strategies.
   • collection and dissemination of appropriate products, processes and practices.

3) • setting priorities and outlining steps toward implementation within an agreed on time frame.

During the course of a semester, the University conducts and enrolled employees are required to participate in:

1) formal, on campus classes for four weekends.

2) three lectures of two hours each in Roosevelt.

3) two open lectures in Roosevelt.

4) one workshop in Roosevelt.

The open lectures may be attended by an employee of the district. Fifty persons were compensated for attending the open lectures.

Linkage Coordination

The Roosevelt/UMass Linkage Coordinator position is a graduate assistantship housed in the school district. The duties of the Linkage Coordinator include the following:

1) Reporting to the Superintendent of Schools and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, who are involved in all phases of the planning, implementation and evaluation of the program, following each session at the University.

2) Serving in a teacher-assistant capacity to the major university personnel involved in the program.

3) Disseminating, orally and in writing, information regarding the program to prospective program participants.

4) Distributing forms and other pertinent admissions and registration materials to those applying for entry into the program.

5) Coordinating travel and hotel arrangements for those accepted for participation in the program.

6) Assisting professors in assigning individuals to groups and serving as liaison between the various groups formed.

7) Organizing and coordinating a professional library consisting of required and suggested readings that are part of the program.

8) Collecting and compiling, orally and in writing, feed-back from participants following each session. Sharing results with University staff.

9) Working closely with the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction on the planning and scheduling of in-district lectures and other visitations of university staff at the Roosevelt site.

10) Disseminating copies of reports, group summaries, articles, messages from professors, memoranda, etc., to program participants, as the need arises.

11) Meeting with groups of individuals requesting assistance with reports, research, and comprehensive position papers and oral examinations.

12) Serving as the student representative on Comprehensive Examination Committees.

Participants

As of December 1, 1984, fourteen teachers and twelve administrators and supervisory personnel have enrolled in the program. Three are not presently enrolled. One participant worked toward, and has received a Master of Arts degree. Two of the active enrollees have had dissertation proposals accepted and are working on their Ed. D. dissertations. Eight other enrollees have completed course requirements for an Ed. D. and are at various stages in dissertation topic preparation and approval. The remaining twelve enrollees are at various stages of course completion.

PROGRAM EFFECTS

Research contends that to accurately measure the effectiveness of staff training particularly that focused on leadership, one must do so over a period of three to five years. Prior to the inception of the Roosevelt/UMass project, Roosevelt staff members participated in other staff development activities. Among them were clinical supervision workshops for administrators given by Dr. Richard Manatt, Iowa State University, and a school climate project which included a full day workshop in Roosevelt by Eugene Howard, Colorado State Education Department. In concert with these activities, and other prior subsequent, and present activities, increased enthusiasm and increased positive image in Roosevelt, the Roosevelt/UMass program has played a significant role resulting in clear and convincing signs of development of a unique and helpful instructional ethos. We believe such an ethos will accelerate the rate of student improvement.

Some of the early signs are:

1) Four of the five principals employed by the district, including the Jr-Sr High School Principal, are program participants.

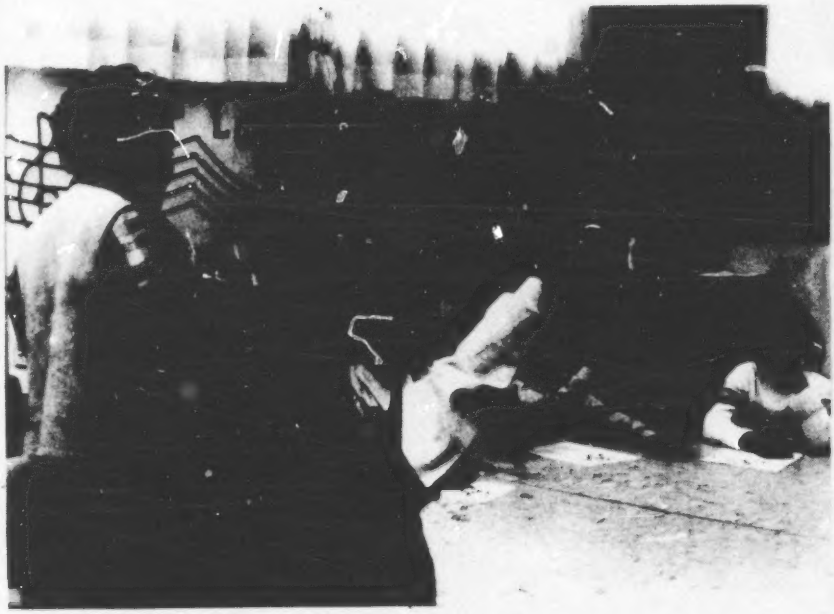
2) At the central office level, (excluding three persons with doctorates) six administrators—coordinators, directors, and/or administrative assistants are employed. Five are active participants in the program.

3) In total, twenty-one administrators, without a doctorate, are employed in Roosevelt. Ten are enrolled in the program.

4) During the initial year of operation, 1982-83, of 250 professional employees in Roosevelt, ten teachers, and six administrators were accepted into the program. Another 88 professional employees attended the open lectures. The total number of participants the first year was 103, thus 41 percent of our entire professional staff was involved.

5) Of the 241 professional employees in Roosevelt during the 1983-84 school year, seven teachers and administrators were program participants (nine finished all course requirements). Another ninety-five professional employees participated in the open lectures. The total number of participants the second year was one hundred nine, thus 45 percent of our entire professional staff was involved.

6) Scores earned by students on standardized tests, Pupil Evaluation Test, and Scholastic Aptitude Test have increased each of the past three years.



SUMMARY

In summary, this program represents a viable approach to effectively involving staff in formal activities and study to identify inhibitors to wholesome pupil learning. The early signs of success supports the belief that teachers and administrators can realize their objectives through a staff development program when goals are job related and useful, when staff's experience meets their professional needs and when people are involved in the selection of the program objectives, content and activities.

The individuals who play major roles in the success of the program are:

Dr. Ulysses Byas — Superintendent of Roosevelt Schools and program initiator

Roosevelt Board of Education who approved and provides annual financial support

Dr. Mario Fantini — Dean, School of Education, University of Massachusetts

Dr. Byrd Jones — Professor, School of Education, University of Massachusetts

Dr. Atron Gentry — Professor, School of Education, University of Massachusetts

Dr. Rodgers Lewis — Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Roosevelt Schools

Ms. Susan Savitt — Director Compensatory Education, Roosevelt Schools, and first Research Assistant/Linkage Coordinator

Ms. Barbara Williams — Elementary Principal, Roosevelt Schools, and current Research Assistant/Linkage Coordinator